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Open Doors.

A Paper Presented on Behalf of the Executive Committee on the Sixty-ninth Anniversary of the Congregational Home Missionary Society, at Saratoga Springs, June 6, 1895.

BY

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OPEN DOORS.

The purpose of this paper is to present, in behalf of the Executive Committee, some of the Open Doors on our great missionary field.

Six months ago, almost to a day, your Committee met for the annual outlook over the vast field of the Society's operations; for reviewing the conditions and needs of the several sections of our land, as these were laid before them in minute and detailed reports and estimates of our Superintendents.

Then the work of the new year, the 70th, was shaped. Statements from the thirty fields of the national administration made manifest urgent needs amounting more than \$437,000.

To do the work which the hand of Providence opens before us; to accomplish the evident duty of Congregationalism to the newer and the rapidly developing portions of the country, that sum was imperatively required.

Every statement from Superintendents was a plea, every report was a cry for help—for an appropriation that would more adequately meet pressing wants, and that new and wide open doors of opportunity might be entered.

When the conclusion of that review was reached, and keenest business sagacity mingled with large faith put its judgment on what could be pledged in the name of the 5,350 Congregational churches of our land for this work of Christian patriotism, the largest figure ventured upon was more than *one hundred thousand dollars* below that for which our burdened superintendents pleaded, as the least that could meet the necessities of their growing fields.

What did that one hundred thousand dollars, denied them, represent? A liberal margin beyond exact and measured needs? Random estimates, from the massing of many possibilities? Large figures, to impress Committee and churches with the greatness of a field? No: not in a single instance.

Those figures expressed the calm, careful, conscientious, intelligent judgment of honored men—our

confidential agents at the front—the trusted leaders in our missionary host: men traversing their fields unceasingly, watching the movements of life, noting the planting and growth of towns, villages and camps; the expansion of cities; the great currents of migration; the changes of population; and, from their places of observation—the outposts upon our great field of service and duty, sending back to the churches, through this Executive Committee, the message of what yet waits to be done—a message which burdens all hearts, as it speaks of the many still looking—and thus far, in vain—for the coming of Him who bringeth the glad tidings of great joy.

That *one hundred thousand dollars* means, every unit of it, Christian work that we to-day cannot touch; opportunities to carry the Gospel to men, women, children, who are without it, here in our own Christian land; religious destitution that we are doing nothing to relieve; conditions of darkness and ignorance, of sin and vice, of wrong and iniquity, that we are leaving uncared for.

Here is the Open Door of a vast, nation-wide opportunity. Here is

the ringing plea of hundreds of specified, designated points in Washington, Oregon, and the Dakotas; in the South—frost-smitten Florida, in famine-stricken Nebraska, and fire-swept Minnesota and Wisconsin; a plea for the Gospel, and the Gospel as it is embodied in the Church of the Pilgrim faith and order.

This Door of unoccupied fields stands open to-day: and we wait the command of the old, strong, well-equipped, enriched churches of the East and the North bidding us to go forward and enter the doors that God's hand has set open before us.

Shall we hear this command voiced in enlarged streams of consecrated gifts flowing into the treasury of this Society?

But the Great Open Door before us to-day cannot be seen in its fullness and vastness in any grouping of the country's needs in a single figure of statement. There are specific and definite fields where necessity is upon us, if we discern in facts the finger of God pointing out the way of duty. We discriminate against no State or Territory in thus specifying and emphasizing some, where the conditions speak most

imperatively, and the call rings most clearly for a larger and stronger occupancy by our Christian forces.

There is first, the wide open door of the new State among our sovereign commonwealths—

UTAH.

At length, after forty-five years of unintermitted efforts, prolonged, persistent, but unavailing because American sentiment resisted so *un-American* a factor in our national life as a Church-State, at length Utah stands on the threshold of the realization of her long desire. Within a twelvemonth she will hold her proportionate power and influence in our national Congress and exercise full self-government at home.

The political aspect and wisdom of this step is not our concern to-day.

What are the moral and religious conditions of the new State of the Union?

The census of 1890 gives facts worthy of note.

Then, Utah enumerated a population of 207,000. In the religious statistics of that census she stood second of all the States or Terri-

tories in percentage of population enrolled in the membership of churches—an enrollment of more than *sixty-one per cent.*

But, of the 207,000 people of Utah, and of the 128,000 enrolled in churches, 118,000 were of the church of the Latter Day Saints, whose prophets have been Joseph Smith and Brigham Young: that church whose deadly grasp has been upon the life of that Territory since the valley of the Salt Lake became the home of this so-called religion.

Here is the basal fact which calls for the large reinforcement of the Christian forces of the new State.

Utah is essentially a foreign country in the heart of our own.

For these forty-five years the strong arm of the national government has been the restraining force upon the self-assertion of its un-Christian and intolerant sentiment and spirit.

Henceforth the contending powers there are to be the moral and spiritual.

The autonomy of a sovereign state is to be hers. The battle is to be fought out by the forces within her own bounds.

And at the outset the competing

forces are sadly unequal. Less than ten thousand enrolled church members (outside the Church of the Latter Day Saints), and of this ten thousand, more than three-fifths, or six thousand, within the Roman Catholic fold—to face and meet the 118,000 of the Mormon Church; a disunited *handful* to oppose a mighty host, perfectly organized, unquestionably obedient to leaders, trained to submission and to action, according to the word of their higher powers; in short, an evangelical Protestant Christian force of but three thousand, six hundred to diffuse the enlightening and converting Gospel through that life born and reared under the delusion of the Mormon faith. To this degree is Utah dependent on the Christian sentiment and Christian reinforcement from the nation.

In the evangelizing force of Utah to-day Congregationalism has no inferior position, though it counts but *ten* organized churches.

The first to establish regular Christian efforts in the Territory, among the first to plant the Christian school there, Congregationalists have now established the first Christian college; and it is not

arrogating undue prominence to the missionaries and teachers of our name there, to affirm that leadership in the regeneration of Utah is put upon us by an unmistakable providence. That which has been accomplished is an honor to the Church of the Pilgrim faith. But *now* is a crisis in the new State: *now* a turning point in her life: *now* the moment to send to the front every available unit of our Christian force—missionary, teacher, business man—to multiply those mightiest factors of all in Christian civilization—the home, the school, the mission, the church.

The evils of Utah are peculiar. Even if the cancer of polygamy seem to have been eradicated, Mormonism as a religious system still dominates, making imperative the most powerful and vigorous of patriotic and Christian agencies to guide and inspire the new life that begins with statehood.

That which has been done in the planting of churches, missions, schools, academies, colleges, has been but to open the way for the larger, deeper, wider work that *must be at once* undertaken; to reveal the duty resting upon us to recognize our leadership, and to

maintain our place among the agencies that are to transform this State of vast material resources and a rapidly growing population into one worthy of a place in the great family of American Commonwealths.

Utah pleads to-day for that enlargement of the missionary force, and missionary funds which shall enable her to multiply church and mission all over her vast territory, not only in populous centers where the Gentile force is strong in civic and social power, but in the hundreds of Mormon communities where no light from the Gospel has yet penetrated the dense darkness, and to meet the infidelity which has been begotten of that Satanic delusion, as well as Mormonism itself. Thus only can be saved and perpetuated the good that has already been accomplished by our missionary force; thus only the harvest even now in sight be garnered; thus only the great *new* demand for Christian activity in the birth of the Territory into statehood be supplied.

Here, if anywhere, throughout our broad land, is a Door, great and effectual, which God opens before us. Shall we enter?

Touching Utah at its southeastern corner is our fourth largest territorial division—New Mexico.

Taking our stand at the point of contact of these two Territories, and looking toward the waters of the Gulf, we note the Second Open Door for vastly enlarged Christian activity.

Already seeking admission as a State, New Mexico will doubtless be the immediate and not far distant successor of Utah to this honor. The question of her fitness for statehood lies not in the number of her citizens, or their dominant faith. It is in the intelligence, the moral quality, the capacity of self-government in that people. Surprising as is the position of Utah in the census rank of its religious condition, New Mexico is more striking yet.

With a population of 153,000, it stands *first* in the United States, with nearly *sixty-nine per cent.* of its people enrolled in church membership. But, of her 150,000 population, above 100,000 are held in the thralldom of a corrupt, despotic Jesuit priesthood. Here is a great Spanish-Mexican people, alien in

thought, spirit and tradition; foreign in language, custom and sentiment; but citizens of this land where intelligence and moral and spiritual freedom are the elements of all true and worthy citizenship. Of mixed Mexican and Indian blood; speaking the Spanish language to the exclusion of the English even in courts and legislature until recently, this great body of our Southwestern people, 100,000 in New Mexico, 200,000 in Texas, and nearly another 100,000 in Arizona and Southern California, inheriting another civilization, ignorant, debased, superstitious, are sunk in a mental and spiritual degradation that is a reproach to American Christianity.

This great volume of life is restless under the exactions, neglect and corruption of their priesthood; numbers are ready to cast off allegiance to the power they have come to hate; already breaking from the Church, they are swinging into unbelief because a pure, vital, winning Christianity is not borne to them.

They are to-day pleading for light and freedom — intellectual and spiritual.

Thirteen denominations are send-

ing their missionaries across the border into old Mexico, to carry the gospel of Christian manhood and womanhood to this same nationality in a foreign field; but overlooking and passing by these hundreds of thousands of our own citizens, in a country where the civil and political environment is a powerful aid in lifting them into liberty of mind and soul. The foreigner of the Southwest is simply a section of old Mexico brought into the bounds of the United States.

And in all this volume of life—these 400,000 Spanish-Mexican citizens, Congregationalism has planted but *three* churches, with mission work at a few associated points.

Into this great field of Christian service this Society finds itself able to put but two thousand dollars a year. A sister denomination annually invests there \$60,000 in education, and \$25,000 in church work, declaring it to be most fruitful and gratifying of all the work of their missionary boards.

Says Supt. Ashmun: “There is almost no limit to the available openings among the Spanish speaking populations; new workers are needed at once, and we have the young men ready to enter; but

there is no money with which to employ them."

The Training School, established at El Paso, is beginning to supply the missionary force long needed. The fields are open: the harvest waits the coming of the reapers. One thing is lacking, the means to send out the preachers, gather the churches, and spread abroad the light of the Gospel of the conquering Christ, through all that dark section of our land.

The church and the school are the forces of civilization needed there to-day supremely. Not yet have these thousands of the sunny Southwest fallen into line in the march of progress.

They wait the coming to them of those agencies which broaden and expand the life of men. Into that vast Open Door of a race to be uplifted in their every conception of life, in their ideals, motives, aims; to be purified in morality, quickened in intellect, aroused in spirit, God's voice of opportunity and need in calling His people.

It is the question of a sovereign State—not far distant—whether it shall be Protestant and American, or Roman and alien, in spirit and type.

But if the *Foreigner of the Southwest* constitutes a field for the immediate and large expansion of missionary activity for the rescue of human souls, and for the making and shaping of a State, that which has once and again been termed *The Vast Ungrasped Opportunity* of the whole missionary field lies in that State, whose territorial greatness has no rival in the land, the commonwealth whose manifest destiny is, soon to be first in population, as well as foremost in extent.

TEXAS.

The flow of even a mighty river like the Amazon into the ocean is imperceptible in its effect upon the Atlantic in its vast sweep of waters. So the stream of humanity which has been moving down into the great Gulf State has spread out over so vast an area as to be unnoticed by any who have not kept open eye for the marvelously rapid rise in the numerical greatness of Texas' population. Ranking *eleventh* in the order of our States in 1880, Texas, in 1890, stood seventh; and in estimates of populations made by governors or other state officials in the opening of 1895, she has risen to the *fifth* place, outranking

old Massachusetts by 200,000 people.

Another national census will doubtless put her *fourth*; and the prediction of Supt. Scofield, four years ago, becomes more and more probable, that when our fourteenth census shall be taken in 1920, Texas will lead in population as she has ever in territory.

Who has heard this Southward sweep of life? Yet, every year since 1880 has seen 70,000 people pouring into Texas. This inflow of life is not from abroad, but from the older States of the Union.

To-day Texas is outranked by New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois and Ohio alone; and in each of those States—old, equipped with every institution of our Christian civilization—social, educational, religious — Congregationalism is a molding force averaging but a little less than 250 churches; while in that vast empire State that borders on Mexico, whose population is rolling up with a rapidity that has characterized no other State of our growing West, for such a period of time, the points that mark the presence of a church of the Pilgrim order are but *seventeen*.

Congregationalism, which has had a growing consciousness of a national destiny and a national obligation, has as yet altogether failed of recognizing its duty to this great Southwest land.

No Christian power has had larger part in shaping the great interior and Pacific commonwealths than have we. No missionary body has been earlier in those fields than the Congregational Home Missionary Society.

Why should we lag behind in the great empire of Texas? While we have been absorbed in the rapidly expanding fields of the Northwest, and of the mountain States, a vast population, unprovided with those forces which most powerfully shape character and mold the moral and spiritual life of a State, has been planting cities and towns by the scores and hundreds in the Lone Star State.

A moment's comparison of relative expenditures of this Society at different points reveals the fact that while we have been endeavoring to lay deep and firm Christian foundations in older sections of the land, a great State has begun to be peopled, in the extreme South, for whose Christian shaping and up-

building almost nothing has been done by us.

The State of Washington, with its 400,000 population, requires \$25,000 for the maintenance of one hundred churches; California, North and South, with 1,350,000 people must have \$28,000 to sustain one hundred and eighty-four churches; South Dakota, with nearly 400,000 inhabitants, receives \$20,000 for the support of about one hundred churches; Minnesota, with its one and a half millions, needs \$18,000 to help carry forward one hundred and sixty-four churches. In all these fields the work had begun before the movement of life into the Southwest assumed the proportions of to-day.

That work in the Interior and Northwest *must* go on.

Texas asks not that other fields be sacrificed for her. But what shall be done for Texas ?

To-day the appropriation for the establishing of Congregational Christianity in her vast territory—the equivalent of four New Englands—is a meager sum of less than \$5,000. The open doors are there in scores. Ten of her larger cities are asking for the Church whose central idea shaped New England.

Houston, Galveston, San Antonio, Austin, Texarkana, Beaumont, Waco, Fort Worth, Gainesville, are pleading for Congregational churches. Thirty towns of from 2,000 to 6,000 inhabitants are open to the planting of a church of the Congregational order, if we could but respond to their needs. Not "open" in that we could crowd into an already well churched community, but towns to a large degree painfully destitute of Christian privileges. It is not possibility of entrance that invites us, but need and urgent necessity that calls for our coming. They know what this form of organized Christianity has done for the North and East. They seek its vigorous, quickening, molding force in the young giant State of the Southwest. Said our Superintendent, not long since: "The opportunity exists to plant churches in dozens—bar-rooms are planted instead." "No words can express the grief of my soul," he writes, "under the crushing sense of the urgency, the vastness of this need. No mortal can calculate the ultimate good which the expenditure through Congregational channels of even so small a sum as \$30,000 yearly for

the next few years would effect. In the taking and holding of this empire for Christ, the churches of the Pilgrim order have a responsibility which can neither be transferred or evaded."

Thirty thousand dollars asked, for the State whose area is fourfold all New England; that her little group of thirteen missionaries might be increased a few fold. Massachusetts, with 200,000 less population, with her splendid Congregational force of nearly six hundred churches, with all her magnificent equipment of educational and religious institutions, requires \$70,000 a year to do her missionary work within her own bounds, and a force of one hundred and twenty-nine men.

WHAT SHALL WE DO FOR TEXAS?

Beyond a peradventure, what this great Southwest empire shall become—and it is only in the earliest stage of its becoming now, though *fifth* in the rank of population—will hinge on the measure to which the forces that have shaped the North, the East, and the West are poured into her life. When Texas shall have the density of population that New England now has, her mil-

lions will exceed those of the whole land to-day, and the problem of the one State will have the proportions of our great national field, as it lies before us at the present time.

This is the urgency of the "now" in Texas. There is our frontier for the future; there the great tide of population swells and spreads over the vast area of her territory. Christ's Church must go with the gathering millions. The Master says: "Give ye them to eat;" the multiplying towns and cities must have our Christian institutions for the sake of homes and lives. Texas must be held for Christ in all its growth. The great ungrasped opportunity of the land must be laid hold upon. Her salvation is vital, as is that of no other one State, to the whole, because of her magnitude, her ultimate power in the nation's life.

Shall we heed her call and send the messenger of the Cross thither?

Let your answer, Brethren, come to us through the *Treasury* of this Society, and ere the months go by, they whose feet are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace will have turned their steps toward the Great Empire State of the Southwest.

